COUNT YOUR WINNERS

Ed Barnes
friedkrill@gmail.com

You're in 4♠. Here's dummy: ♠K62
♡Q63
♢5432
The lead: ♠5 ♣J76

Here's your hand: ♠AQ987
♡AJ
♢AQ6
♣AK8

When dummy hits the table and you're in the throws of panic, try the following:

1) count your winners (here it's 5♠ + 1♡ + 1♢ +2♣ = 9)
2) Subtract the total from the number you need (10 – 9 = 1)
3) Find the extra trick or tricks required (Here the heart suit is a sure bet for 1 extra trick)
4) Do the hard work (play the ♡A & ♡J)
5) Draw trumps (Ending in dummy, so as to cash the ♡Q)

It's really that simple.

…ON COUNTING WINNERS…

We're not counting the tricks we "think" we can win. Rather, **it's the tricks we KNOW we can win**.

In trumps, we're more optimistic. We count the tricks we're LIKELY to win. So we expect normal "breaks",but we don't expect finesses to win.

<u>So in side suits and in notrumps:</u>

Ax	opposite	xxx	= 1
Axx	opposite	Qx	= 1
AKx	opposite	xxx	= 2
AKQx	opposite	xxx	= 3
AKJx	opposite	xxx	= 2
AQ	opposite	Jxx	= 1
Kxx	opposite	JTx	= 0
KQx	opposite	xxx	= 0
AQJ	opposite	xxx	= 1
QJT	opposite	98765	= 0

<u>In the trump suit:</u>

AKxx	opposite	Qxxx	= 4
AQxx	opposite	JTxx	= 3
KQxx	opposite	xxxx	= 2
KQJx	opposite	xxxx	= 3
AQxxx	opposite	Kxxx	= 5
Axxxx	opposite	Kxxx	= 4[1]
KJxxx	opposite	Qxx	= 4
AJxx	opposite	xxxx	= 2
AQxxxx	opposite	xx	= 4
KTxxxx	opposite	xx	= 3

Why do we treat trumps and side suits differently? We're not counting tricks for the fun of it. We're counting so we know what to do next. Our trumps, even the little ones, will always have an impact. This is not true of little cards in our side suits. If we wish our long side suit to have an impact, we have to do something about it. And this is why we are counting. The 5 steps:

1) Count your winners
2) Subtract the total from the number you need
3) Find the extra trick or tricks required
4) Do the hard work
5) Draw trumps

the rest is easy!

[1] when missing 4 cards, a 3-1 break is the most likely break.